SPRING CLASSES
PAGE 4

STUDENT ART
PAGES 8 & 9

COMMUNITY EVENTS
PAGE 5

Home of the Arctic Dragons

Mat-Su Monitor

WINTER 2025 FREE VOLUME 49 NUMBER 2

A Journey Towards Wellness

By Joseph Peterson

With winter setting in and classes in full swing, students have a lot on their minds. Luckily there are fun and healthy activities on campus to engage with, through the Journey Program! Journey is the wellness program at Mat-Su College. It puts on fun and healthy activities like yoga, mindfulness, and trail walks that anyone can take part in. Journey is dedicated to helping students improve themselves holistically, which means overall life improvements. Journey is well-funded thanks to a grant, and the organizers are open to ideas from students, so let them know your ideas for campus wellness!

Community engagement is a powerful thing, and Journey is an excellent way to get connected, make friends and have fun! Grab some friends and show up for yoga! Or show up for the trail walks with Micah from the library! Take the next step on your journey towards wellness!

For more information, search Journey on the Mat-Su College website or visit https://v.gd/C9o3EH

MSC Students wins Scholarship from UAA College of Business

Asuzena Carter, Aleah Gustafson, Kaia Hunsaker attend the College of Business and Public Policy (CBPP) StudentMeet-Up event at UAA's Rasmussen Hall.

Kaia Hunsaker winner of a 2025 CBPP scholarship

Dr. Bernard and several of our MSC Business students attended the College of Business and Public Policy (CBPP) Student Meet-Up event at the Anchorage campus's Rasmussen Hall.

Asuzena Carter, Aleah Gustafson, Kaia Hunsaker, and Alyssa Rycraw (not pictured) represented the MSC Business Department very well! They participated in a Giant Jenga competition, Corn Hole, and an array of other festivities including the grand opening of the new student space "The Suite."

Students who attended were entered into a scholarship drawing totalling $35,000, and Kaia Hunsaker was one of the scholarship winners! Way to go Mat-Su! It was a really fun event and we can't wait to go next year!

Upcoming events:

December 25 - January 2: Winter Break - Mat-Su Campus closed

January 12: Spring 2026 semester begins.

January 19: no classes, campus closed.

January 23: add/drop deadline (5 PM in person, 11:59 PM in UAOnline).

February 2: Summer 2026 classes available to view in UAOnline.

February 7: Fund you Future Financial Aid Fair

February 15 : Daedline for Foundation Scholarships

February 16: Open registration for Summer 2016 classes

March 2-5: Therapy dogs on campus.

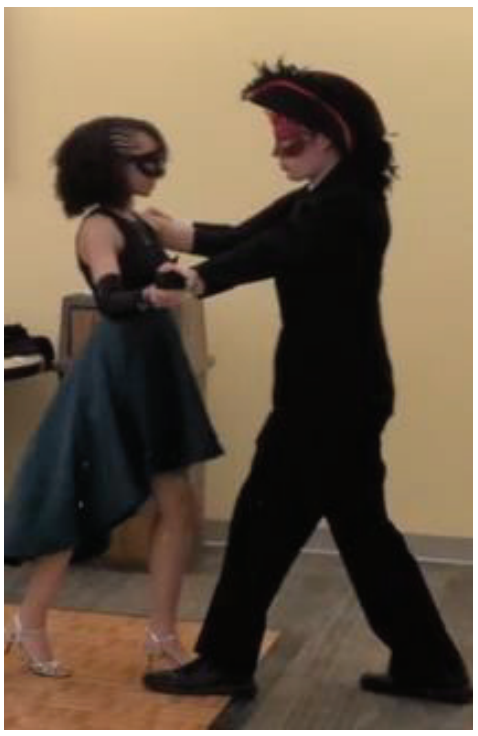
March 16: Fall 2026 class schedule available to view in UAOnline.

March 27: Withdrawal deadline.

March 30: Open registration for Fall 2026.

April 28-May 1: Therapy dogs on campus.

Student Government hosts Masquerade Ball



Above: Dance Club students peforming the Tango. More photos and story on page 7.

INDEX

What's New 2
Student Government 3
Spring Schedule 4
Community Events..... 5
Around Campus 6
Student Art 8
Puzzles 10

Student art is displayed on the upper floor of the Fred & Sara Machetanz Building. You can view more student art on pages 8 & 9.

The Last Question

By Levi Smith

He never left the room. Not for years, if anyone had been counting. The curtains were drawn tight, thick black fabric blocking every thread of sunlight. Dust clung to corners, coating stacks of books, papers, empty mugs, and worn clothing. The air smelled faintly of mildew and old pages, heavy and stagnant, like time itself had been trapped here.

He sat on the edge of his unmade bed, hunched forward, a laptop balanced on his knees. His hair had grown long and tangled, brushing into his eyes. Pale skin, unmarked by sunlight, made him almost vanish into the shadows of the room.

A soft chime broke the silence. He clicked to answer.

"Hello, Mom," he said, voice low and cautious.

"Hello, sweetie," came the reply, warm, patient, familiar. "How have you been?"

He paused. The words felt heavy in the still air. "I... I've been... okay. Mostly."

See LAST QUESTION *page 11*

Club meeting times:

Check to see if your favorite clubs have new meeting times in Spring semester!

ADVET
Book Club
Dance Club
Dungeons & Dragons
Human Services/ Journey
JEDI
Robotics
Turning Point USA

Congratulation 2025 YWCA Award Winner!

Our very own Dr. Jennifer Bernard was one of the YWCA 2025 Women of Achievement Awardees! She now joins the ranks of over 350 Alaskan women who have received this honorary award. The award is described as follows:

Held annually, this celebratory event acknowledges the exceptional leadership of women in Alaska. Each year, ten women are selected based on their demonstrated personal and/or professional leadership and their service to the community which aligns with the mission of YWCA Alaska to empower women, eliminate racism, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

YWCA 2025 Woman of Achievement Award representing Peace, Justice, Freedom and Dignity.

The induction ceremony was held at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage on November 3rd and had over 400 in attendance. Congratulations, Dr. Bernard!

Dr Jennifer Bernard receives the 2025 YWCA Women of Achievement Award

Women of Achievement Awardee Criteria: How her activities and accomplishments tie into YWCA Alaska's mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Her involvement in and commitment to her community and to Alaska as a whole. Her personal impact on others and the greater Alaska community. Her leadership, mentorship, and efforts to help advance others. Her accomplishments within her profession, industry, field and/or area of interest.

You can find more information on the Women of Achievement Awards at: https://ywcaak.org/programs/leadership/woa/

Mat-Su College Business Department Sudents Lend Helping Hands for the Holiday.

Dr. Bernard's Business Foundations Class students Trinity Daughtry and Amber Jeffries and the Nonprofit Management Class—Dawn Adamson, Emily Duenas, Jennifer Golden, and Teresa Smith—stepped out of the classroom and into the community by volunteering their time to help serve Thanksgiving dinner at Frontline Mission during the holiday break.

Dr. Bernard encourages her business students to be an active part of the community, as giving back to help others in need is a part of what doing "good business" is all about.

Frontline had over 450 volunteers scheduled for the Thanksgiving Dinner Outreach, and it was wonderful to see our Matsu College students out there making a significant difference through small acts of kindness. Kudos, Team MSC!

Meet Chelsea Sohm

Mat-Su Monitor Reporter, Joseph Peterson had the opportunity to interview instructior Chelsea Sohm, an education instructor at Mat- Su college.

Monitor: Why did you choose to become a teacher? Was there any formative event that sparked your interest in teaching?

Chelsea Sohm: I had great teachers throughout elementary, middle, and high school that left lasting impressions on me. They built relationships with students, made content easy to understand, and genuinely enjoyed their jobs. I still keep in touch with a few!

Monitor: What goals do you have for yourself at Mat-Su?

Sohm: I want to help grow the education program for the Mat-Su area. We need high-quality teachers to be nurturing development and learning in our child cares, preschools, and district and private schools.

Monitor: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Sohm: I enjoy making learning meaningful and purposeful for my students. I like to help students understand and learn, but then also know how to implement the content and information in a way that is fun and engaging.

Monitor: What is your background?

Sohm: I grew up in Chugiak and am a graduate of the Anchorage School District. I have a Bachelor's in Elementary Education (UAA), a Masters in Business Administration (University of Phoenix), and a Grad Certificate in Educational Leadership (UAA). I taught Kindergarten and 1st grade for six years, was an instructional coach for two years, an assistant principal for two years, a district administrator (Preschool Director with the Anchorage School District), and now an Assistant Professor for two years. I have worked in education in Tennessee, Arizona, and Alaska.

Our family January 2025

Monitor: What is your ideal teaching style?

Sohm: I would say my teaching style is collaborative. I involve my students in the learning and value their experiences and backgrounds to help make sense of what we are learning.

Monitor: Have you worked in education before Mat-Su? If so, how does Mat-Su compare?

Sohm: Yes (see above). It is nice working for a smaller community campus. I have had a great experience with the people, organization, and processes so far.

Monitor: What kind of impact are you hoping to have on Mat-Su?

Sohm: I hope to help shape high quality teachers for our current and next generation of children.

Monitor: Is there anything else you want readers to know about you?

Sohm: I have been married for three years, have a daughter who is a year and a half, love animals (we have three dogs and an axolotl), enjoy weight lifting, and make custom sugar cookies!

Monitor: Thank you for your time.

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Submissions policy

Students are invited to submit articles and letters to the editor to matsu.monitor@alaska.edu or at https://matsu.alaska.edu/monitor. The Mat-Su Monitor will not accept anonymous submissions, though with prior arrangement articles of a sensitive nature can appear anonymously. All submissions are subject to editing and will only appear with the approval of the editor.

Disclaimer

The Mat-Su Monitor is the student newspaper of Mat-Su College. The Monitor aims to report college news and serve as a forum for student writing. The Monitor seeks submissions of news, editorials, and short fiction from all students, staff, and faculty of Mat-Su College. All students are invited to attend the Monitor's weekly meetings. Details on participating in or submitting content to the Monitor can be found at https://matsu.alaska.edu/monitor

The Mat-Su Monitor is funded by the Mat-Su College Student Government Association and our advertisers. For information on advertising in the Monitor contact Micah Muer at mwmuer@alaska.edu or 907-745-9758.

The opinions expressed the Monitor article are solely those of its authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the college, its students and employees, or the wider University of Alaska system.

UA Tuition Increase Statewide

By Aaron Thomas
SunStar Weekly Newsletter 11/11/2025

The University of Alaska Board of Regents, or BoR, approved a 4% tuition increase across the system beginning Fall 2026 at their recent board meeting. Regents met to discuss budget requests for the fiscal year of 2027. In addition to budgeting, they reviewed land management, student retention programs, housing initiatives, healthcare plans, and elected new officers.

The raised tuition amounts to a $10-$12 increase per credit hour for undergraduate students and a $21-$22 increase per credit hour for graduate students. For in-state students enrolled in 12 credit hours, average semester tuition costs will rise from $3,576 to $3,719 while non-resident students will see average tuition rise from $10,776 to $11,207. The rationale given by the BoR for the increase was to address rising fixed costs, provide better student mental health services, and improve recruiting and student retention rates across the broader UA system.

Get involved with your
STUDENT
GOVERNMENT
Meetings Tuesdays
4:00 - 5:00 FSM 106

FINALS SNACK WEEK

Check it out! Refreshments can be found in Snodgrass Hall commons and in the Atrium throughout finals week Dec. 8-11. From snack bars, chips and mac & cheese to energy drinks coffee and cocoa students can find something to keep them going between testing.

Brought to you by your M at-Su College Student Government.

New Scholarship Program at UAA

The Office of Financial Aid at UAA and the UA Foundation have partnered with AWARDED to offer a more seamless and efficient scholarship awarding process. Starting in October 2025, students who are interested in Foundation scholarships don't need to work through a lengthy application process. Instead, information you provided during the admissions process will be automatically transferred to get you on your way to being matched with scholarships you may qualify for; departments and committees will do the rest!

Want to qualify for even more? A quick visit to the AWARDED platform (http://alaska.student.awardedsoftware.com/) will give you the opportunity to complete a short profile and answer one optional essay question to possibly qualify for scholarships with additional eligibility criteria. Some scholarships may require supplemental information. Please check your AWARDED student dashboard regularly so you don't miss out!

MAT-SU MIDDLE COLLEGE
NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL WITH UP TO 60 CREDITS!
Priority application period: January 4TH - March 5TH
Family Information Night Webinar posted at https://www.matsuk12.us/domain/6968
Go to matsuk12.us/msm for more information!
MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
or 907.761.3495
907.761.3498
MSM@matsuk12.us
www.matsuk12.us/msm

Dragon Dinners at the Ready!

Mat-Su College students, staff and faculty fill food boxes to help hungry students

By Austin Dodge

On Wednesday, October 29, a group of students and staff met at the Mat-Su Food Bank. In assembly line fashion, they filled over 130 "Dragon Dinner" boxes. These boxes contain staples such as pasta, oatmeal, rice, and more. The boxes are distributed on the Mat-Su College campus – free of charge, and without restriction – as part of a plan to alleviate hunger among the campus community.

Before they finished their day's work, the volunteers filled over 130 food boxes.

According to the UAA Hunger and Homelessness support network, over 44% of UAA students have experienced food insecurity.

Students who could benefit from a "Dragon Dinner" food box can pick one up from the Student Government Office (JKB 114), the Campus Cache store (JKB 109), and from various carts situated about campus. Students can also go to a food bank and show their student ID card.

To volunteer to fill the next round of boxes, or to learn more, stop by the Student Government Council office in JKB 114 (right next to the cafeteria).

The "Dragon Dinner" boxes are sponsored by the Mat-Su College Student Government, the Mat-Su Health Foundation, and the Mat-Su Food Bank.

Students and staff and faculty assembling food boxes at the Mat-Su Food Bank on Wednesday, October 29, 2025.

04 SPRING CLASSES

ACCOUNTING
- Principles Financial Accounting
- Principles of Managerial Accounting
- Workpaper Prep & Present

ANTHROPOLOGY
- *Alaska Native Cultures
- *Alaska Native Perspective

ART
- *Art Appreciation
- *History of Western Art I
- Advanced Painting
- Intermediate Watercolor
- Beginning Painting
- Intermediate Painting
- Beginning Watercolor
- Introduction to Art Education

AVIATION TECH/PROFESSIONAL PILOTING
- Private Pilot Ground School

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
- *Business Foundations
- Business Law I
- Computer Concepts in Business
- Entrepreneur & Small Bus Mgmt
- Fundamentals of Supervision
- Marketing Practices
- Personal Finance

BIOLOGY
- *Human Anatomy & Phys I & Lab
- *Human Anatomy & Phys II & Lab
- *Introductory Biology & Lab

CHEMISTRY
- *General Chemistry I & Lab
- *General Chemistry II & Lab
- *Intro to General Chemistry & Lab
- *Intro to Organic/Biochemistry & Lab

COMMUNICATION
- *Fund Oral Communication
- *Public Speaking

COMPUTER & ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY
- CCNA 2
- Comp User Support & Help Desk
- Customer Service Fundament
- Industry Net Directory Config
- Individual Technical Project
- Industry App Infrastructure
- Industry Workplace Experience
- Local Area Networks
- PC Technician Fundamentals
- Intro to Information Security

ECONOMICS
- *Principles of Macroeconomics
- *Principles of Microeconomics

EARLY CHILHOOD EDUCATION
- Creativity Early Childhood
- Health Nutr Wellness Child
- Guiding Young Children
- Early Childhood Practicum

EMERGENCY SERVICES
- Emergency Medical Tech I

ENGLISH
- Introduction to Creative Writing
- *British Narratives
- Creative Writing Workshop

GEOGRAPHY
- *Discovry AK Physical Geography

GEOLOGY
- *Planet Earth & Lab

HISTORY
- *Europe in the Modern Worl
- *History of United States
- The Second World War
- *Western Civilization Before 1650

HUMAN SERVICES
- Intro to Population Health
- History of Systems of Change
- Cases in SUD Treatment

JUSTICE
- *Intro to Criminal Justice
- *Intro to Juvenile Justice
- *Theories of Crime and Offenses

LANGUAGES
- *Elementary ASL II
- *Elementary Japanese II
- *Elementary Spanish I
- *Elementary Spanish II

LOGISTICS
- Logistics, Info Sys & Cust Service

MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS
- *Applied College Algebra
- *Calculus I
- *Calculus II
- *Calculus III
- *Elementary Statistics
- Intermediate Algebra

MEDICAL ASSISTING
- Medical Terminology
- Essentials of Human Disease
- Your Health & Social Services Career

MUSIC
- *Music Appreciation

PHILOSOPHY
- *Early Modern Philosophy
- *Intro to Logic
- *Introduction to Philosophy

PHYSICS
- *College Physics I & Lab
- *College Physics II & Lab
- *General Physics II & Lab

PSYCHOLOGY
- *Introduction to Psychology
- *Lifespan Development

QUANTITATIVE SKILLS
- Elementary Algebra
- *College Algebra for Calculus
- *Trigonometry

REFRIGERATION & HEATING
- HVAC/R Control Systems
- HVAC/R Distribution System
- HVAC/R Troubleshooting
- Refrigeration & AC II
- Plumbing Codes II
- Plumbing: Supply Piping

SOCIOLOGY
- *Introduction to Sociology

STATISTICS
- ***Elementary Statistics**

VETERINARY ASSISTING
- Handling & Behavior: Lg Animals
- Introduction to Large Animals
- Vet Anatomy & Physiology

VETERINARY TECHNICIAN
- Applied Sm Animal Behavior
- Vet Diag Imaging & Dental
- Vet Anesthesia & Analgesia
- Vet Clinical Pathology & Lab

WRITING
- Accelerated Learning Program
- *Arguing Across Contexts
- *Writing & the Professions
- *Writing & the Sciences
- *Writing Across Contexts
- Intro to College Writing
- Intro to Grant Writing
- Writing & Reading Strategies

WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES
- *Intro to Gender & Sexuality

This list is subject to change. Visit matsu.alaska.edu and click "Course schedules" for the most current list of scheduled classes.

**Indicates class meets General Education requirements (GERs)*

Semester runs January 12 - May 2

Prospective Students Vet Tech Program Orientation

By Nick McDermott

The Vet Tech Associate of Applied Science Degree at Mat-Su College is a two-and-a-half-year program that combines classroom instruction with hands-on training. This orientation comes as the Vet Tech program, which launched its first cohort in Fall 2024, is now accepting applications for its exciting second round of students that will begin classes in the fall of 2026.

Co-Director of the program, Assistant Professor, and licensed Vet Tech, Rebecca Walker says, "A proactive approach to the application process will help you be more successful. If you haven't written an essay or a résumé in a while, reach out to our campus career advisor for assistance. And meet with an academic advisor early to ensure you are academically qualified for the application."

Event Highlights Include:

- Application Process Insights: Detailed information on program requirements and the application steps.
- Facility Tour: A chance to explore the program's advanced facilities, including a surgery/anesthesia area, diagnostic lab, x-ray machine, and ultrasound machine.
- Meet the Team: An opportunity to interact with Dr. Montalbano, Professor Walker, and other dedicated faculty members.
- Financial Aid & Registration Assistance: Support and answers to academic, financial aid, and registration questions.

The Vet Tech Program at Mat-Su College aims to address the shortage of veterinary technicians in Alaska and provide skilled workers for this high-demand industry.

Information and links to the application can be found at https://matsu.alaska.edu/academic-programs/veterinary-medicine/

Mat-Su College Hall-O-Ween

On October 31st, Mat-Su College hosted its fourth annual Hall-O-Ween trick-or-treat event. The event brought together students, employees, children from several nearby elementary schools, and home-school kids. Participants trick-or-treated up and down the Mat-Su College campus, playing games and getting candy.

In the lead up to Hall-O-Ween event (first held 2022) employees and student organizations decorated campus. Many departments and employees decorated their doors.

During the event, participants entered through the doors to the FSM lobby. From there they could walk down to the end of the JKB building. Every stop had candy, plus the following activities:

Student Services - Student Services staff hosted a mini-golf game.

FSM Lobby - The Bright Lights Book Project handed out free books to children.

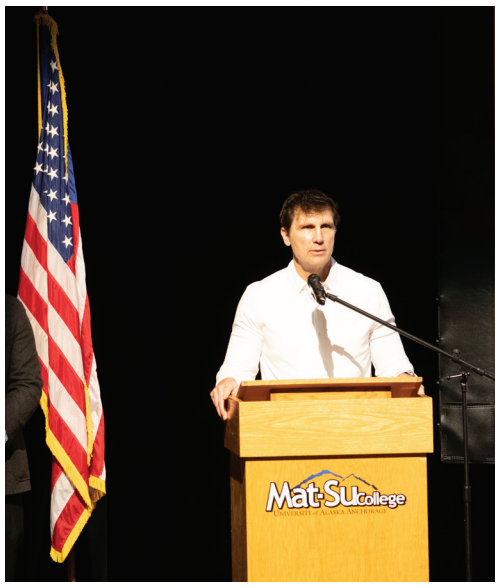
Library - The Book Club used the library space to lead games of Simon Says for groups. Winners got free books donated by the Bright Lights Book Project. The library provided coloring pages, stickers, and decoratable masks.

Director's Office - The Director and her staff did a "Pin the Eyes on the Monster" game as well as a small mini-golf set-up.

See **HALL-O-WEEN** *page 11*

Mat-Su College Veterans Day Tribute

Every year, Mat-Su College holds a memorable event at the Glenn Massay Theater. This year was no exception. The best part of the Veterans Day event is the powerful and heartfelt connection between the public and the veterans themselves. Emcee PO3 Will Oliveria lead the audience through an inspiring experience beginning with the Glenn Massay Theater director Garry Forrester singing the National Anthem. Cadets from the Colony High JROTC performed a poignant POW/MIA Table Ceremony. Jessy Lakin of the Battle Dawgs gave a heartfelt speech about his experiences. The recipient of the Veteran Dedication was retired SMSgt. Tom Spangler, USAF. A live performance of Taps played SMSgt. Doug Sheaffer, USAF, Retired, and a flag dedication followed. Governor Mike Dunleavy gave closing remarks. These moments allow communities to directly express their gratitude for the courage and sacrifice of those who have served.



SMSgt. Tom Spangler, USAF, Retired

Conlony High school JROTC cadets. Cadet-in-charge: Cadet Master Sergeant Aiden Siems, Cadet Corporal Abigail Palmer, Cadet Corporal Astra Hines, Cadet Sergeant First Class Jasper Hansell, Cadet Private Paxton Rivers.

Left: Governor Dunleavy offering closing remarks.

Below:Jessy Lakins of Battle Dawgs share his story.

Taps played SMSgt. Doug Sheaffer, USAF, Retired

Above: JROTC cadets holding the flag for dedication. Right: Cadet Master Sergeant Aiden Siems at the POW/MIA table ceremony

Sergeant Jessy Lakin, Battle Dawgs Director of Operations.

Mat-Su College Club Fair & Barbeque

MSC Fall 2025 semester kicked off with a vibrant burst of student activity as the Student Government hosted a Club Fair, providing a lively platform for students to explore involvement opportunities and connect with their peers. Held earlier this semester on September 28th, the event successfully drew a significant crowd, showcasing the diverse tapestry of organizations available on campus.

The fair transformed the Atrium into a bustling hub, with tables representing a wide array of interests. Students mingled enthusiastically, getting a chance to meet current members and sign up for groups ranging from academic and hobby-based to cultural and service-oriented.

The variety of clubs present ensured there was something for everyone. Notable organizations at the fair included:

- **GSA Club:** Promoting inclusivity and support for LGBTQ+ students.
- **Dungeons & Dragons:** Inviting students to delve into the world of fantasy role-playing.

In attendance at the Club Fair / Barbecue were Dungeons & Dragons, JEDI, Dance Club and Book Club.

- **Robotics:** Attracting tech enthusiasts interested in design, building, and competition.
- **Bible Club:** Providing a space for faith and fellowship.
- **Book Club:** Encouraging literary discussion and shared reading experiences.
- **ADVET Club:** Catering to students interested in veterinary care and animal welfare.
- **Human Services/Journey Club:** Focused on community service and professional development in social services.
- **Nihongo Club:** Celebrating Japanese language and culture.
- **Dance Club:** Offering rhythm, movement, and performance opportunities.
- **JEDI Alliance** (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion): Dedicated to promoting a fair and equitable campus environment.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, Student Government provided a popular barbecue lunch serving up classic fare like burgers and hot dogs. The complimentary meal not only fueled the excitement but also created a relaxed environment for casual conversations.

Beyond the club representatives, members of the Student Government were also on hand to chat with students, answer questions about campus governance, and encourage participation in student life. The opportunity to meet both club leaders and elected officers gave attendees a comprehensive look at how they can shape their university experience.

Overall, the Club Fair successfully fostered a sense of community and involvement, setting the stage for an active and engaging semester for all students.

Would you like to know more about a specific club mentioned in the article, or perhaps get details on how to start a new club on campus? Attend a Student Government meeting, stop by their office JBK 114 or send an inquiry to uaa_msc-studentgov@alaska.edu

Mat-Su College Students Celebrity Diversity With Game Night

By Austin Dodge

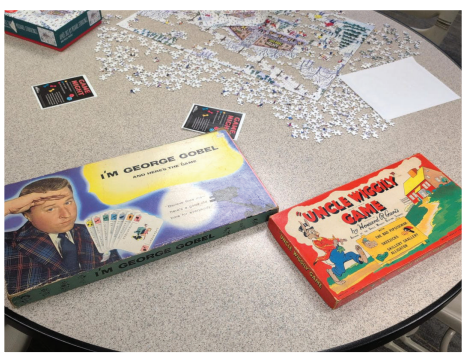
From 4-6:30 PM on Tuesday, October 21, the Mat-Su College JEDI Alliance Club hosted a game night. The event was open to all students, staff, and faculty.

Participants brought a wide variety of games, from I'm George Gobel to Cards Against Humanity, and plenty more. Home Style Plus, the restaurateurs that operate the campus cafeteria, catered the event with a veritable smorgasbord.

The event was so well-attended that the JEDI Alliance Club is already thinking ahead to their next game night event.

JEDI stands for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Though the University of Alaska Board of Regents demanded the removal of the words diversity, equity, and inclusion from University webpages, student clubs remain free to use those words.

See the JEDI Alliance Club webpage for more information on the club. https://matsu.alaska.edu/offices/student-government/student-clubs-and-activities/untitled.cshtml



Student Government Hosts Annual Pink Off!!

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As such, on October 22, MSC Student Government held its annual pink-off contest. Students were encouraged to wear pink (the color of breast cancer awareness) and participate in a contest in which they were judged on their outfits' creativity, sportiness, casualness, creativity, formality. The five top winners received prizes ranging from a $50 dollar Amazon gift card to a $20 dollar Sonic gift card.

Around 1 in 12 American women will develop breast cancer. If you are interested in joining the fight against breast cancer, consider donating to a reputable charity. https://www.charitynavigator.org/discover-charities/best-charities/breast-cancer/

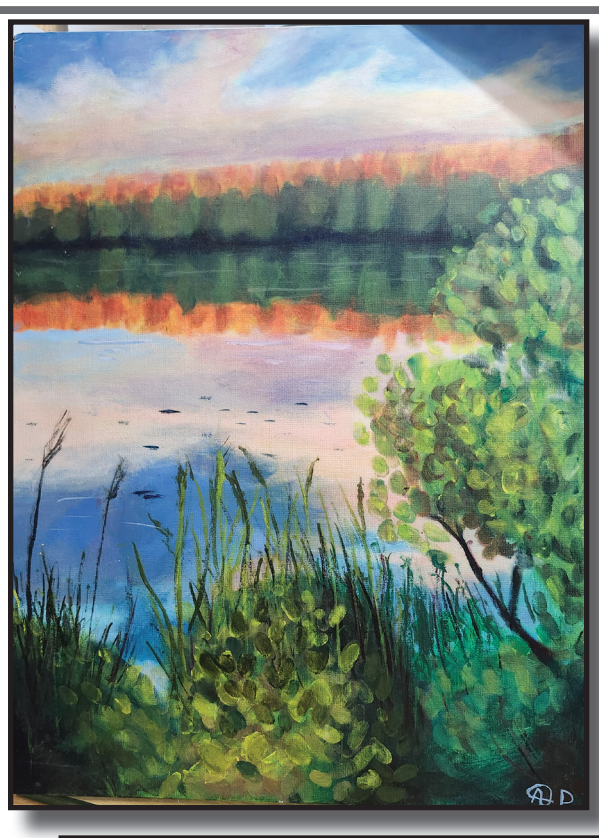
Left: Pink-Off winners
1st place: Irina Vdovichenko most fancy
2nd place: Amber Godin most sporty
3rd place: Aydan Pavia-Jones most pink
4th place: Micah Horning most casual
5th place: Isaac Vaughan most pink

Student Government Masquerade Ball

Mat-Su College students and their guests gathered on November 21st for a night of mystery and merriment at the Masquerade Ball. The event, a vibrant social highlight, offered attendees a sophisticated evening filled with music, performances, and fun. Student Government also hosted a mask-making party with a hot-chocolate bar earlier in the week.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS ARE IN DEMAND!
Many jobs require training but not a degree.
Mat-Su Health Foundation vocational scholarships can help!

MAT-SU HEALTH FOUNDATION
Apply today at healthymatsu.org



SFW

Wunderkind: The PhD Thesis of Wernher von Braun

By Justice A. Darby

"Konstruktive, theoretische und experimentelle Beiträge zu dem Problem der Flüssigkeitsrakete" by Wernher von Braun (which will be referred to as "von Braun's PhD thesis" or "his PhD thesis") impacted western thought by solidifying the leadership and genius of Wernher von Braun in rocket development programs, shown in his later importance to both the Nazi regime and the United States. The events that led to von Braun's involvement with the Nazi regime can be glimpsed briefly in his PhD thesis in the development of the A-2 rocket. His documentation on rocket theory and engineering gives one of the first papers on the development of liquid rockets and why the German army wanted to keep it secret. This would go on to influence von Braun's leadership in future rocket development ranging from ballistic missiles to the Saturn V.

Context: The Leadup to *Wunderkind*

The way in which von Braun would come to write his thesis is in how he would catch the eye of his employer: the *Reichswehr* or German army before 1935. Still in his college career, von Braun was an avid enthusiast for rockets and space, always looking for ways to push the boundaries of human understanding. When the *Reichswehr* showed up in the spring of 1932 curious to see the outcome of the latest *Verein für Raumschiffahrt* (Society for Spaceship Travel), or *VfR*, rocket experiment, von Braun would personally take data of the experiment to the army and ask for financial support for *VfR* rocket experiments. The army would grant this request on the grounds that all development and testing would be done in the army under strict secrecy (Ward, 2005, p. 18).

Through the army's influence, von Braun would enroll in the Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Berlin (FWU Berlin) and continue to work under contract for the *Reichswehr* (Ward, 2005, p. 19). There, von Braun would develop his knowledge for rocket theory and engineering, culminating in his thesis in 1934. Due to the secrecy of his work, von Braun's thesis was given the enigmatic title of "*On Combustion Experiments*" and was removed from the FWU Berlin's records (Neufeld, 2007, p. 69).

Content: It is Literally Rocket Science

What was in von Braun's thesis that was so secretive that it was removed from the public record? By von Braun's time, the processes in which rocket nozzles worked were well understood in theory. Many experiments from Robert H. Goddard and papers from Ludwig Prandtl and Theodor Meyer for example attest to this as far back as 1908 before von Braun was born. The difference here is von Braun's thesis managed to document the process in which rocket nozzle theory could be used in a practical sense to govern the engineering of rockets.

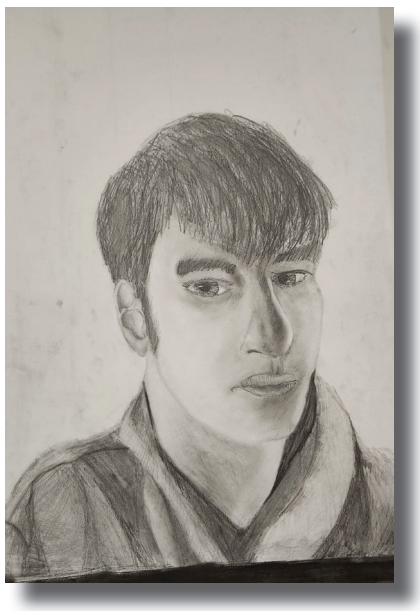
In the 1930's the *Reichswehr* were looking for loopholes in the Treaty of Versailles regarding armaments. While the treaty had shrunk the size of the warships, armies, and planes of Germany, the treaty did not forbid the use of rockets as nothing about the banning of rockets was stated. When the army heard about the rocket experiments the *VfR* were doing, they showed up to the experiments to first observe and then train personnel in secret for the *Reichswehr*'s rocket development program. It was this fact that the development was secret that caused the *Reichswehr* to turn von Braun's thesis into classified information (Ward, 2005, p. 17).

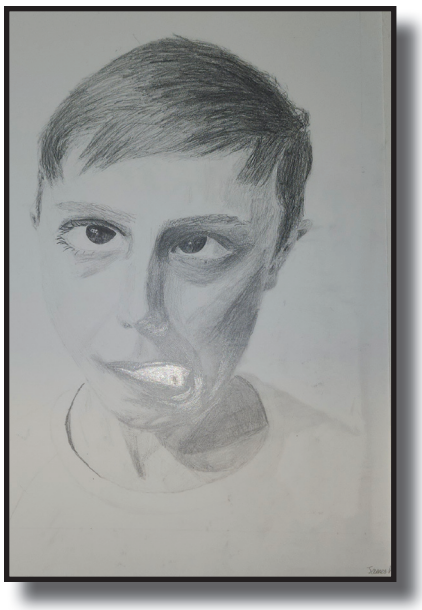
Von Braun's thesis consists first of a section on A-2 test engine and its components. Following up is a section documenting the thermodynamic and chemical theory of rocket nozzle operations, detailing information from chemical equilibrium to gas expansion. From there, the next section details the development of the A-2 test engine and the process in which the engine is started for testing. The paper ends with two sections, one on the results of the testing of the A-2 engine while the other section details a method for calculating rocket trajectories (von Braun, 1934, p. 4).

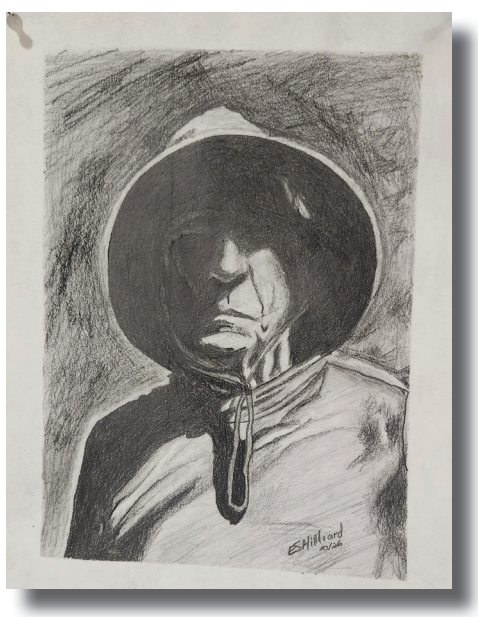
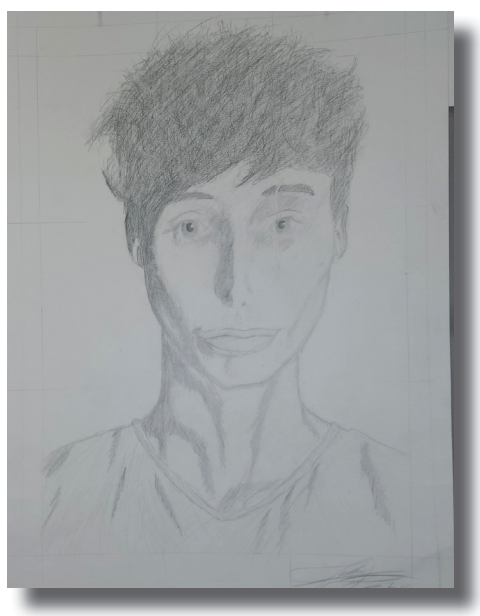
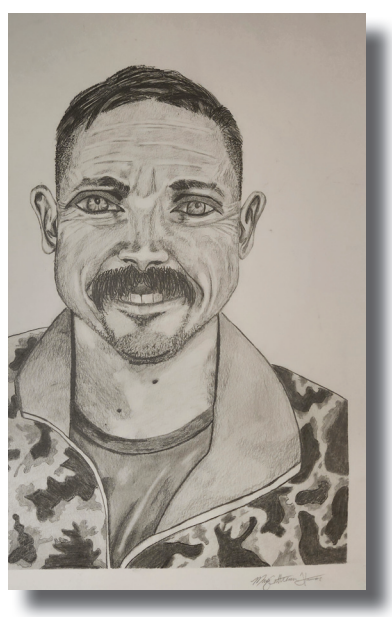
Impact: "I aim at the stars, but sometimes I hit London"

From von Braun's thesis came his most important aspects: his indispensableness, leadership, and knowledge. After finishing his thesis, Von Braun would start out small in the *Reichswehr* with the group of rocketeers from the *VfR* and one mechanic designing the next generation of rocket and the first ballistic missile, the A-4 (Ward, 2005, p. 18). The development of both the A-2 and A-4 would garner the attention of multiple groups from the *Luftwaffe* to the *Schutzstaffel* (*SS*) who would try and steal von Braun's group away from the army. The army, now the *Wehrmacht* by 1935, would

See **VON BRAUN** *page 11*





The Crystal Heart and the Crimson Star: A dragon's Christmas Miracle

The Frostbound Village

The village of Winter's Peak nestled deep in a valley where the sun barely kissed the shortest day of the year. For generations, the villagers lived in fear of the Silent King, a magnificent, ancient Arctic Dragon named Niv'gor, whose home was the highest, perpetually frozen mountain. Niv'gor was not malevolent, but he was fiercely territorial, and his occasional passage sent bone-deep chills and blinding blizzards down the slopes, making the deep winter a time of dread, not joy.

This year was the worst. An unnatural, suffocating cold had descended weeks before Christmas Eve, freezing their livestock and cracking the very stones of their hearths. The oldest elder, Elara, knew this wasn't just weather; it was Niv'gor's sorrow made manifest.

The Broken Tradition

Young Lira, a girl known for her quiet courage, remembered the old tales her grandmother used to whisper—tales of a time when the dragon was a protector, not a menace. The key, the stories suggested, was the Crimson Star—a perfect, unfrozen winter rose that bloomed once every hundred years on Christmas Eve, deep within the forest. It was a gift of peace, meant for the dragon's hoard. But no one had dared retrieve it for centuries.

That afternoon, Lira noticed a terrible crack in the village's central ice sculpture—a towering, beautiful crystal heart that they kept perpetually chilled. It wasn't just ice; it was a symbol of their communal warmth and hope. With the cold this severe, the heart would shatter by midnight.

"The Crimson Star," Lira whispered, pulling on her thickest furs. "It's the only thing that could warm the King's heart enough to save ours."

A Journey of Courage

Ignoring the frantic pleas of her parents, Lira ventured into the twilight forest. The cold was a physical weight, pressing her to the ground. After hours of searching, just as the sun dipped completely, she found it: a single, vivid red rose pushing through the deep blue snow, radiating a gentle, almost unbelievable warmth. **The Crimson Star.**

She cradled it carefully, turning back, when the ground began to shake. A shadow fell over the forest, eclipsing the meager moonlight. Niv'gor landed twenty feet away, his scales like millions of fractured sapphires, his eyes two burning pools of glacial ice. He was grieving, she realized. Not angry, but in immense pain.

"Dragon King," Lira said, her voice trembling but steady. "I have brought you a gift."

Niv'gor lowered his massive head, his nostrils flaring, sending icy vapor that coated Lira's hair in instant frost. He saw the rose, but his gaze went beyond it, to her small, beating heart.

See **CRYSTAL HEART** *page 11*

CRYPT-O-QUOTE

HINT P=D, E=U

Here's how it works: A R C T I C D R A G O N

is B S D U J D E S B H P O

One letter stands for another. In this example the letter B stands for the letter A so all the Bs stand for the letter A, Ds stand for C, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, and word length are all clues. The code letters are different for every puzzle.

CEYVT WFC, ZOFV XWE'YF WV COF YBAOC

DKCO WDDWYCEVBCBFT CW EVRWUP KUWVA

COF ZKX. - OWPK HWCG.

SUDOKU

Fill the grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3 x 3 section contains all of the digits 1 through 9.

					7	2	4	3
6			5		1	7	9	
			8			6		12
	4	7	6		3			
3	3	1	4	9		5	6	7
	9				5			4
7	5			2				
2				8	4	9	1	
		8			6		7	

Resolutions' Follies

The clock strikes twelve, the champagne flows, New year's zeal brightly glows! "I'll quit the couch!" cries clumsy Stan, And drops the pizza in the pan.

Young Jen vows, "Less online time!" Then instantly checks her last meme climb. Old Bill declares, with mighty sound, "I'll eat just greens, year-round!"

His wife just nods, with knowing eye, and hands him his sweet cherry pie. We promise much, we falter fast, But hope and laughter always last! We'll try again next time, we say, And nap the resolution day away.

HOMONYM HAVEN

R	U	O	L	F	E	T	F	N	E	E	D	O	E	W
I	D	E	W	O	L	L	A	L	O	U	D	S	K	E
G	T	E	W	W	O	R	E	T	L	A	E	I	A	A
H	K	A	E	W	H	E	T	H	E	R	A	T	R	T
T	O	E	E	R	S	O	A	N	I	D	R	E	B	H
Y	K	R	M	I	T	L	L	A	L	T	A	R	A	E
O	O	O	G	T	E	W	L	E	A	P	E	L	I	R
U	K	H	T	E	A	C	O	T	I	A	E	H	L	E
R	T	T	T	L	L	E	C	E	K	O	M	A	L	E
E	O	S	H	A	I	R	C	T	H	E	R	E	C	L
N	D	A	G	B	A	E	I	H	H	U	L	O	O	E
I	R	E	I	L	M	A	T	E	O	E	U	R	A	A
G	E	L	N	E	G	L	E	Y	E	R	I	T	R	S
H	V	O	K	N	E	A	D	R	S	A	O	R	S	E
T	O	V	E	R	D	U	E	E	F	A	R	E	E	D

Circle the words from the list below. Place the leftover letters in the spaces for a special message!

_ _ , _ _ _ , _ _ _

Von Braun *continued from page 9*

counter with better contracts and use contacts in the Nazi regime to retain the rocket scientists (Ward, 2005, p. 19-20). This resulted in von Braun's group receiving a continuous source of funding and attention in further development of the A-4. As time would progress and World War 2 (WW2) started, von Braun's group would grow to around 5000 personnel and have development facilities in Peenemünde, Germany, and Mittelwerk in the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp (Neufeld, 2007, p. 164-165).

As WW2 raged on, the A-4 rocket would be renamed to the Vergeltunswaffe-2 (Vengeance Weapon 2), or V-2 for short, and its development would become a high priority for the Nazi regime (Neufeld, 2007, p. 152). All would not be well for von Braun as he would be arrested by the Gestapo in 1944 on charges of treason. This was likely a politically motivated move by *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, then the head of the *SS*, to gain control of the rocket development program. However, he would be released through influences from both the *Wehrmacht* and Albert Speer, the Reichs Minister of Armaments and War Production, who had swayed Adolf Hitler, citing von Braun's indispensableness to the Nazi rocket development program (Neufeld, 2007, p. 172-173).

Von Braun's experience and indispensableness would become a common theme in his life. Von Braun's leadership, knowledge, and experience would make him unchallenged in rocket development programs to the point of escaping punishment and death. After WW2 ended in Europe, the US army would recognize the effectiveness of von Braun and his team and immigrate 118 scientists and engineers to the US in Operation Paperclip. Here, von Braun's team would work on launching V-2 rockets taken from Germany in WW2 and begin working on more advanced ballistic missiles for the US army from the Hermes to the Jupiter-C. To make sure von Braun's group stayed in the US, the US Army worked to sweep von Braun's past with the Nazi regime under the rug and keep von Braun's involvement in US missile development a secret for the time being (Biddle, 2009, p. 145-147).

In 1960, with the launch of the Space Race, von Braun's group would be incorporated into the newly founded NASA to develop, for the Apollo Program, what would become the group's magnum opus, the Saturn V. Having had decades of knowledge and experience in leading large rocket development projects, von Braun was put as head of the development of the Saturn V (Ward, 2005, p. 126), which remained the most powerful rocket ever launched for decades, only being beaten out by NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) and SpaceX's Starship in recent years.

Conclusion

Von Braun's thesis served to impact western thought by cementing his leadership and knowledge in rocket development. His road towards working for the Nazi regime in the development of the A-2 and A-4 can be seen briefly from the leadup to his PhD thesis. The reasons for why von Braun remained an indispensable asset to both the Nazi regime and later the US can be glimpsed by looking at what his thesis was about. Finally, from his experience comes his importance in the later development of other projects from ICBMs to the Saturn V rocket. Von Braun truly was unmatched in his time.

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Last Question *continued from page 1*

"Mostly?"

"Mostly," he repeated. "I get up. I eat. I… keep busy. It's quiet."

The conversation drifted. She asked about the books he'd read, what he'd eaten, the little things that passed his days. And he answered, carefully, truthfully, as he always did.

Near the end, her voice softened, gentle but probing. "Have you… forgiven yourself yet?"

The question struck him like ice. His chest tightened; the cluttered shadows pressed in. He froze, words caught in his throat.

He swallowed, dry and shivering. Fingers hovered above the keyboard. His mind scrambled, searching for words that might carry the weight of everything he had buried inside.

"I…" he began, taking a shuddering breath, gathering courage for something he had never said aloud. Something that might finally lift the burden he carried.

"I forgive you… no, I forgive myself—"

A faint beep echoed.

Voice Recorder: Battery Low.

He didn't look away. Slowly, almost mechanically, he reached for the small charger and plugged it in. The soft hum of electricity filled the room. His fingers lingered on the cord, on the device, a small, futile gesture against the silence.

The recording began again.

"Hello, sweetie. How have you been?"

He answered, quietly, carefully, just as he had every day.

The room remained still, shadows pooling in the corners, dust motes drifting lazily in the faint light that seeped through the curtains. His voice echoed softly against the walls, a ghost of a conversation, endless and unbroken.

And he hoped.

He always hoped.

Hall-o-ween *continued from page 5*

Student Government Office - Members of Student Government built and operated a Nerf gun shooting range.

Cafeteria - Student Services staff held Cake Walks every thirty minutes. Winners walked away with free cakes.

JKB Science Lab - At least one science professor (Prnka) ran a fishing pond made with a small pool and rubber ducks. Kids could keep their caught rubber duck or trade it in for candy.

Refrigeration and Heating area - Arguably the stars of the night, the Robotics Club and the Refrigeration and Heating staff and faculty put together a haunted house. Lights were covered with red paper to give the space an eerie ambiance. Many animatronic contraptions terrified those who entered the space.

All over campus - Dance Club did periodic flash mob performances of Michael Jackson's Thriller all over campus.

Event organizers say about 250 people came to this year's Hall-O-Ween.

Crystal Heart *continued from page 10*

The Miracle of the Gift

"You trespass," the dragon's voice boomed, a sound like an avalanche. "The price is the unending frost."

Lira stepped forward, holding the rose high. "The frost is not a punishment, King. It is your sorrow. Your hoard is immense, but it is cold. This," she held up the rose, "is the Crimson Star. It does not add to your treasure; it warms the space between your treasures."

She walked right up to his snout and gently laid the warm, scarlet bloom atop the ice-blue scale just above his eye.

As the rose touched his skin, a soft, crimson light pulsed. Niv'gor recoiled with a shuddering roar, but it was a roar of release, not wrath. The light traveled down his body, revealing something the villagers had never seen: a single, deep fissure running down the center of his chest, from which the intense, sorrowful cold was leaking.

The moment the light reached the fissure, the dragon gasped. A tiny, brilliant shard of ice—the source of his ancient grief—flew out of his chest and shattered on the ground.

Christmas Day

As the clock struck midnight, marking Christmas Day, the air around Lira grew suddenly, wonderfully mild. Niv'gor stood up, looking at Lira with eyes that no longer burned with ice, but sparkled with the clear blue of a summer sky.

He gave a great, powerful flap of his wings. It wasn't a blizzard that swept through the valley, but a shower of sparkling, warm frost, like soft, silver-white snow.

Lira returned to Winter's Peak to find the broken Crystal Heart whole again, glowing with a soft inner light. The intense cold was gone, replaced by a bracing, pleasant winter air. The livestock were stirring, and the hearths were burning bright.

The villagers looked up and saw Niv'gor ascending the mountain. But instead of fear, they felt an overwhelming sense of peace. The Silent King was silent no more.

From that day forward, every Christmas Eve, Lira and the villagers would leave a single, perfect Crimson Star on the mountain path. And every Christmas morning, they would find not blizzards, but a small, carefully placed gift: a beautiful, unfrozen crystal feather, a token from their newfound Guardian of the Peak. The dragon's sorrow had been lifted, and his cold, powerful presence had become their Christmas Miracle.

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